



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



### MASTER CHIEF HAS CENTER STAGE

Master Chief (MC), service dog for SDDVA's Steve Oliva, had the opportunity to show off his talents and expertise this week. MC was one of four dogs that were part of the Paws Canine Foundation's presentation to the American Legion in Pierre.

Rob and Gail Dickerson shared the Paws Canine Foundation story and had four of their dogs demonstrate the variety of services they are trained to provide.

The Sioux Falls leg of Paws currently has 50 dogs that they are working with. Big Paws Canine Academy and Foundation trains and provides service therapy and companion dogs to disabled veterans and former first responders injured in the line of duty. Operated entirely by volunteers, no one takes a salary and all donations go directly to the veterinary care, training, and equipment of the dogs. For more information, go to <http://bigpawscanine.com/>

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Photo courtesy of Pierre Capital Journal

## SD GUARD PARTICIPATES IN MOCK CRASH SCENE TO EDUCATE TEENS

Members of the South Dakota Army National Guard, along with local emergency responders, participated in a mock crash scene to educate high school freshmen on the impacts of making bad decisions, at Camp Rapid, Sept. 30.

The mock crash is a part of a one-day prevention program called Freshman Impact: Caught in the Moment, coordinated by the non-profit organization C.O.R.E. (Community Organized Resources for Educating our youth), which provides hands-on activities for students to learn the consequences of destructive teenage behaviors.

To leave a lasting impression, a realistic crash scene unfolds in front of the students.

"The atmosphere for this is very somber," said Staff Sgt. Lyn Waldie, SDARNG recruiter. "You feel it. It feels real. The scenario has actors from the Stevens High School's drama club while Rapid City police officers, paramedics, firefighters and a funeral director all respond to the scene as if it were real."

The scenario involves a vehicle full of students who leave a party while under the influence of alcohol and drugs. The driver of the vehicle crashes into a parked military dump truck and skid loader, leaving Soldiers injured, one of the students dead, and the rest with physical and emotional trauma.

The scenario continued to unfold with a funeral and court case.

"After the court case, we showed the students how a bad decision continues to follow them through life," said Waldie.

During the scene, one of the students walks into the recruiter's office a few years after the accident and wants to join the military but because he was given a distribution charge for methamphetamine the night of the accident, he is not eligible.

"I learned a lot," said Spencer Flory, a freshman at Stevens High School. "Be safe, don't impair yourself with alcohol, drugs or texting while driving or operating any motor vehicle. A bad decision just doesn't affect one person it can ruin your life and someone else's."





## CUSTER — THE COMMUNITY THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

This week, the community of Custer was honored by Gov. Daugaard as the community of the year for their unending support to our veterans and their support of Operation Black Hills Cabin (OBHC).

This community received this recognition during the Governor's Philanthropy Luncheon on National Philanthropy Day.

Founded in 2011 by military retirees Jeff and Pat Baird, Operation Black Hills Cabin offers a week-long respite, to qualifying wounded veterans from the Iraq/Afghanistan campaigns, and their families, at little or no expense to them, except for transportation. It provides a therapeutic environment to assist qualifying combat-injured veterans with their rehabilitation from their traumatic and stressful experiences, while serving the interest of our Nation. It also provides an opportunity for the disabled veterans to reacquaint themselves with their family in a quiet, peaceful and leisurely environment, far away from the stress and daily routine which has now become their "new normal".

This project provides a much-needed diversion to qualifying veterans and their families, from their daily grueling existence of medical appointments and therapy sessions, financial stress and living with a life-altering injury. It provides them with quality time to adjust to their "new normal" and is a small way to say "thank you" to them, and to show them this Country's gratitude.

To date, more than 200 people and 40 area businesses have participated in welcoming veterans who have visited from more than 25 states.

OBHC notes that "One rock standing alone is just a rock. Many rocks together become strong and sturdy and form a wall." OBHC has a wall that runs deep and wide. We encourage all of you to visit these links and see their list of cabin partners, family partners, and financial contributors.

<http://www.operationblackhillscabin.org/cabin-partners.html>

<http://www.operationblackhillscabin.org/family-partners.html>

<http://www.operationblackhillscabin.org/financial-contributors.html>

Helen Keller once said, "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."

Thank you Custer, for opening and sharing your hearts with the veterans that need your support!!!!!!!



## SDNG RECRUITING BATTALION CHANGES COMMAND

Lt. Col. Steve Siemonsma, of Piedmont, took command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion during a change-of-command ceremony, Saturday, Oct. 3, at Joint Force Headquarters on Camp Rapid.

Siemonsma assumed responsibility from Lt. Col. Kory Knight, of Hartford, who served in the position since October 2012.

"It is a privilege and honor to take command of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion during a time when strength management is so important," said Siemonsma, a native of Sioux Falls. "I am looking forward to the opportunity to work with such a great group of professionals."

As commander, Siemonsma is now responsible for about 26 recruiters in communities across the state with a mission to recruit and retain quality Soldiers in the SDARNG.

"I look at everyday as an interview and am looking forward to my interview with this outstanding unit," said Siemonsma.

Knight is now assigned as the administrative officer for the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade in Sioux Falls.

Siemonsma's career in the SDARNG began when he enlisted in the Service Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery in December 1995. By September 1998, he received his commission as a second lieutenant through the SDARNG's Officer Candidate School. As an artillery officer, he was assigned to Battery C, 1/147th FA in Yankton.



Some of his career highlights include liaison and fire direction officer for the Headquarters and Headquarters Service Battery, 1/147th FA, commander of Battery B, 1/147th FA, officer strength manager and operations and training officer for the Recruiting Battalion in Rapid City, and the administrative officer for the 1/147th Field Artillery Battalion in Watertown.

Prior to his assignment as R&R Battalion commander, he was the deputy for the Construction and Facilities Management Office at Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City.

Siemonsma also completed a tour of duty in Iraq, deploying with 2nd Battalion, 147th Field Artillery in 2004-2005.

Some of Siemonsma's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary and GWOT Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal and the Combat Action Badge.



# Sergeant Colton Levi Derr ★★★ FOUNDATION

Gallantly Forward

2015 Gala

SATURDAY, October 24

Rushmore Plaza Civic Center  
LaCroix Hall | Doors Open at 5pm

**Tickets \$35**

Buy for veterans if you can't attend!

Social | Dinner | Silent & Live Auction  
Guest Speakers | Battle Buddy Award  
Live Music by The Potter Family

SGT Derr battled with Post Traumatic  
Stress Disorder (PTSD) following his  
combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We honor Colton by helping  
his fellow veterans.


*The battle does not end  
when the war is over.*

The  
Sergeant Colton Levi Derr  
FOUNDATION  
would like to thank Print Mark-et

Get your ticket  
to support  
OUR HEROES

Just call or go online!

605.545.2505 

 SergeantDerrFoundation.org



## 153RD ENGINEER BATTALION CHANGES COMMAND

Lt. Col. Trent Bruce, of Sioux Falls, took command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 153rd Engineer Battalion during a change-of-command ceremony, Saturday, Oct. 3, at the Huron National Guard armory.

Bruce assumed responsibility from Lt. Col. David Daily, of Sturgis, who served in the position since September 2013.

"It is a humbling experience to get this opportunity to take command of the 153rd Engineer Battalion and follow in the footsteps of the great leaders that have come before me," said Bruce, a native of Custer. "I am truly honored to lead the men and women of the units that comprise the battalion all across the state."

As the commander of the 153rd, Bruce is now responsible for the command and control of about 800 soldiers in seven units in 12 communities throughout South Dakota. The 153rd assists assigned units in meeting training, administrative and logistical requirements to maintain the unit's readiness in support of their state and federal missions.

"This battalion has been recognized two years running as the very best in the nation, and I look forward to working with the soldiers and leaders within these ranks to maintain that reputation, train hard, and be ready when the nation or state calls," said Bruce. "I look forward to maintaining the tradition of excellence that has been established for the battalion and continuing the momentum the soldiers have built."

In civilian life, Bruce is an engineer and serves as vice president of the consulting firm DeWild, Grant, Reckert and Associates Company (DGR Engineering) of Rock Rapids, Iowa. He currently serves as office manager and department head for DGR's Sioux Falls office.

Daily, also a native of Custer, will be assigned to the Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City as the deputy for the Construction and Facilities and Management Office.

Bruce's career in the SDARNG began in 1993 as an enlisted bridge crewmember of the 211th Engineer Company in Custer. In May 2000, he received his commission as a second lieutenant through the South Dakota State University Army ROTC program where he was assigned as an engineer officer in Company C, 153rd Engineer Battalion, in Parkston.

Some of Bruce's career highlights include company commands of Company B, 153rd Engineer Battalion and the 211th Engineer Company of Madison, both plans and operations officer for the 153rd and executive officer for the 153rd and 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade of Sioux Falls.

Bruce has been mobilized twice for deployments overseas where he served as commander of Company B, 153rd, in Iraq from 2004-2005 and as the engineer operations officer for the 196th MEB in Afghanistan from 2010-2011.

Some of Bruce's military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.



## **Honoring Native Pride and Spirit—Yesterday, Today and Forever!**

The South Dakota National Guard in concert with the SD National Guard Museum, the South Dakota Department of Veteran Affairs, Crazy Horse Memorial, Tanka, Black Hills Area Council #695, Boy Scouts of America, Throwback Softball, Sperlich Consulting, Women Veterans of the Black Hills and the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce invite you to view the Oceti Sakowin (Oh-CHAY-tee Shaw-KOE-ween) Code Talker Congressional Medallions in observance of Native American Heritage month. Join us as we honor the Code Talker Veterans, their families and all Veterans who served or are currently serving in the military!

The Exhibit & Honor Ceremonies will be at the following locations:

### **October 14th—Indian Learning Center, Pierre, SD**

New Gym, 3001 E Sully Avenue, Pierre, SD

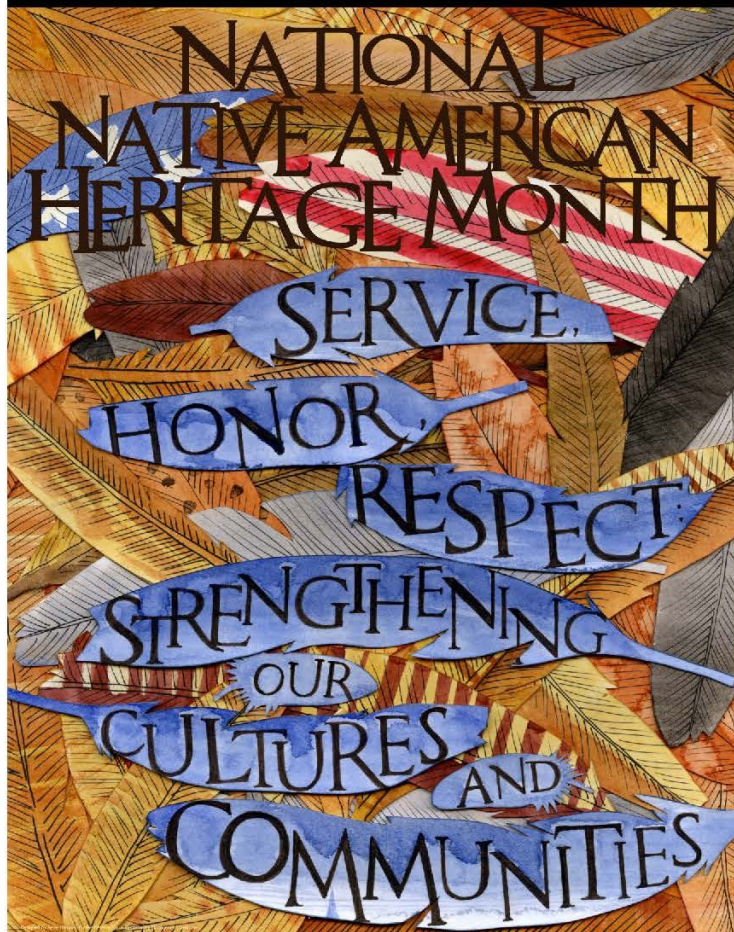
### **October 21st—Lake Area Technical Institute, Watertown, SD**

1201 Arrow Avenue, Student Center/Campus Event Center (level 4), Watertown, SD

### **October 28th—University Center, Sioux Falls, SD**

4801 N. Career Avenue, Admin Building, 1st Floor Commons Area, Sioux Falls, SD

### **Veteran's Day/November 11th—Crazy Horse Memorial, Crazy Horse, SD**



### **Oceti Sakowin Code Talker Congressional Medallion Exhibit & Celebration!**

All booths will be open from  
10 am to 3 pm local time

Honor Ceremonies will start at  
11:11 am local time

Eligible Veterans can bring  
their DD 214 and register with the  
SD Department of Military and  
Veteran Affairs

SD National Guard Recruiters will be on  
site at all events! Come join the **Guard!**



# Upcoming Events

- Oct. 9—SFVAHCS Women Veterans Conference—Central Baptist Church in Sioux Falls (3100 W. Ralph Rogers Rd) 9:00 am (CT)
- Oct. 10—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
- Oct. 14—Code Talker Medal Exhibit—Pierre: Indian Learning Center, New Gym—3001 E. Sully Ave. (10-3 CT)
- Oct. 14—Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Building Relations Session
- Oct. 21—Code Talker Medal Exhibit—Watertown: Lake Area Technical Institute—1201 Arrow Ave., Student Event Center (level 4) (10-3 CT)
- Oct. 24—VVA Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting—1519 W. 51st St—Sioux Falls—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
- Oct. 28—Code Talker Medal Exhibit—Sioux Falls: University Center, 4801 N. Career Ave., Admin Bldg. (commons area) (10-3 CT)
- Nov. 4—Boots to Business—Starting or Growing a Veteran-Owned Business—Pierre Post 8 American Legion (520 W. Pierre St) - 8:30 am—3:30 pm (CT)
- Nov. 7—Vietnam Veterans of America State Council Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—Noon (CT)
- Nov. 11- Code Talker Medal Exhibit—Crazy Horse Memorial
- Nov. 13—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Hot Springs—10:00 am
- Nov. 16-17—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Redrossa—Pierre 1:00 pm (CT)
- Nov. 17—Women Veterans Honoring Ceremony—SRST Admin Bldg—Ft. Yates, ND 11:00 am
- Nov. 18—Veterans Council Leg. Round Table—Sioux Falls—(DAV —1519 W. 51st St) 11:30 am (CT)
- Nov. 19—Veterans Council Leg. Round Table—Watertown—(Amer. Leg. Post—1412 9th Ave. SW ) 1 pm (CT)
- Nov. 21—Veterans Council Leg. Round Table—Rapid City (VFW Post 1273—420 Main Street) 10 am (MT)
- Dec. 1—SDDVA Mini Conference—Rapid City TREA—1981 Centre Street—10:00 am (MT)
- Dec. 2—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre—American Legion Post 8 —520 W. Pierre Street (CT)
- Dec. 3—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings—American Legion Post 74—1229 Western Avenue (CT)
- Dec. 8- Governor's Budget Address—Pierre

## 2016

- Jan. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
- Jan. 12—SD Legislative Session Opens—Pierre
- Jan. 14—Veterans Legislative Breakfast—Pierre
- Jan. 27-28-State Tribal Relations Days—Pierre
- Apr. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
- April 15-17—DAV Convention—Rapid City
- Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
- Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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